

REMARKS

Applicants hereby respond to the Official Action mailed June 27, 2003.
Reconsideration of claims 1-5 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-5 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, because of the presence of the phrase "especially water" in claim 1. That phrase has been deleted. Accordingly, the rejection under 35 USC 112 can and should be withdrawn.

Claims 6 and 7 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,211,916. Claims 6 and 7 are cancelled herein, so this rejection is moot.

Claims 1, 6 and 7 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,827,561 ("Serfass"). This rejection is moot as to claims 6 and 7. As for claim 1, the subject matter of claim 5 has been inserted into claim 1 to require that after the evolved gas is recovered from the liquid, the liquid is recycled to the line in which the liquid is flowing, upstream of the pressure reduction region. This amendment overcomes the anticipation rejection of claim 1 as Serfass does not disclose any recycle as now required in claim 1.

Claim 1-5 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious from U.S. Patent No. 5,211,916 ("Cheng '916") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,061,406 ("Cheng '406"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As the Examiner has acknowledged, Cheng '916 does not disclose stripping dissolved gases from a liquid that contains dissolved gases. So Cheng '406 is cited as providing that missing piece of disclosure, as though the combination of that piece with Cheng '916 renders applicants' claimed invention obvious. However, this rejection does not suffice to establish obviousness, for several reasons.

One reason is that the piece of disclosure that the Examiner draws from Cheng '408 is only a generalization, not necessarily applicable to the apparatus taught by Cheng '916, and not necessarily applicable to the method claimed by applicants, whereas the law of obviousness rejections requires a more specific set of teachings that can be combined, and motivation to combine them.

A second reason is that Cheng '408 must be assessed not only for the particular assertion used by the Examiner but for all that it teaches, in context; and the context of Cheng '408 is predominantly concerned with enhancing dispersion of gas, by creating many very fine bubbles, which is the opposite of the evolution and separation of gases from liquid that applicants' invention addresses. Indeed, the Serfass reference teaches that formation of fine bubbles of gas interferes with the separation of the gas from the liquid.

In sum, the combination of the two Cheng references still leaves one without a method that removes dissolved gases from the liquid, and without a reason to combine those two references.

Therefore, applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 1-5 under 35 USC 103(a) can and should be withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,



Donald T. Black
PTO Reg. No. 27,999
Attorney for Applicants

Praxair, Inc.
39 Old Ridgebury Road
Danbury, CT 06810-5113
Telephone: (203) 837-2669
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